

Montana's School Food Service Peer Consultant Training Network

A Montana Team Nutrition Project



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What is it?

A group of outstanding school food service directors from Montana schools comprise the Montana Team Nutrition's School Food Service Peer Consultant Training Network. The purpose of the Peer Consultant Training Network is to provide the opportunity for these trainers to share their expertise with other school food service professionals throughout the state. The trainers will act as mentors to assist other schools in their efforts to provide healthy meals which meet the USDA regulations in a cost effective manner.

Who can use it?

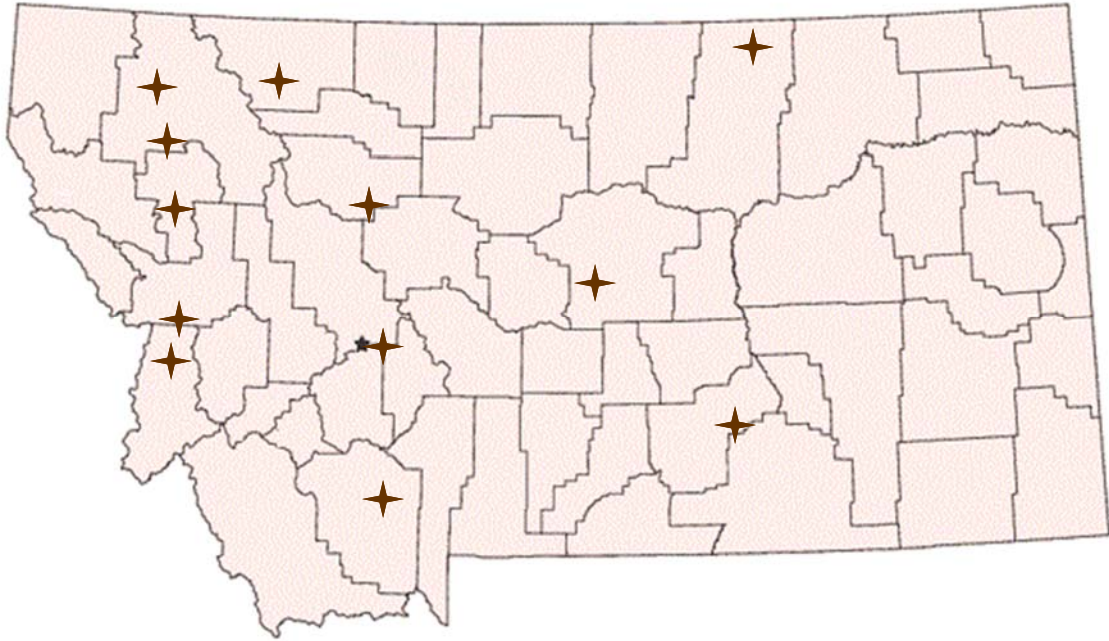
School food service professionals throughout Montana and/or other school staff interested in promoting school meals, offering healthy foods, increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, working towards creating a healthier school environment, or promoting healthful ala carte sales. Peer Training Consultants can mentor other food service professionals through one-on-one consultations (through site visits, telephone or email) and in group training sessions.

Meet the trainers!

It is our pleasure to introduce the professionals that comprise the School Food Service Peer Training Network! The trainers are conveniently located around the state. Don't hesitate to contact a trainer near you or the Montana Team Nutrition Program for a referral to a Peer Training Consultant. The directory will also be available online via the OPI School Nutrition Programs website:

http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/MTTeam.html#p7GPc1_6

Map of Peer Trainers Around the State



Western

Linda Free
Kathy Martin
Jay Stagg
Robin Vogler
Marsha Wartick

Central

Jayne Elwess
Cindy Giese
Dona Kruse
Tammy Wham

Northern

Lynne Keenan
Wanda Sand
Carol Simonton

Trainers are listed alphabetically by last name



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Jayne Elwess

Jayne Elwess is the School Nutrition Manager for the Montana City School in Clancy, MT. Jayne has a wealth of food service experience- 21 years in the school food setting and 15+ years in other food service areas. Jayne has been a positive leader and professional advocate throughout her career. She served as an Executive Board Member for the Montana School Nutrition Association and was the State President in 1997, 2003, and 2015. She was also an active member of the OPI ABC Committee, OPI State Peer Mentoring Program, OPI Commodity Committee, Board of Agriculture, Montana Hunger Coalition, Eat Right Montana Coalition, and more. She has been the honored recipient of numerous national and state-level awards for Excellence in Child Nutrition.

During Jayne's time working as the Food Service Director/Manager for the Conrad Public Schools she successfully led a school kitchen remodel and increased the lunch program participation to over 100,000 meals per school year. She also started the Conrad School Breakfast program, which eventually became a free breakfast program to all students. Jayne began a "Grab and Go" breakfast which increased breakfast from 35 participants per day to 135 per day. Additionally, she started an After School Snack Program and was a pilot school site for "Recess Before Lunch."

Montana City School participates in the school breakfast and school lunch program. Jayne and her staff (2 employees) serve an average of 58 students for breakfast and an average of 283 students for lunch daily. The staff prioritizes from scratch cooking and provides an awesome salad bar.

Recent successes include:

- Enhancements to the school breakfast program have increased participation from 29 to 58 students per day; providing students a great jump start to their day.
- Jayne is passionate in creating a pleasant atmosphere in her school lunchroom so students are more open to trying new food items, eating more fruits and vegetables, and accepting the changes towards whole grain products.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: Menu Planning · Personnel Management · School Breakfast Program · School Lunch Program · Increasing Participation · Utilization of Commodity Foods



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LINDA FREE

Linda is the Food Service Director for Lolo Elementary School in Lolo, Montana. Linda has 26 years experience working in school food service programs. Linda began working part-time for the school food service program in 1989. One year later, Linda was moved into a full time position. Linda has worked in every position in her school kitchen. In 2000, Linda was promoted to Food Service Director. Linda was working at Lolo Elementary when it became the first Team Nutrition School in Montana. Linda led Lolo Elementary to be the first school in Montana to receive the USDA HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Award; she also serves as the contact person for Montana's Gold Model School. As a graduate of Lolo Elementary herself, Linda takes great pride in their food service program.

Lolo Elementary food service program participates in the breakfast and lunch program. Linda and her staff (6 employees) serve 110 breakfasts and approximately 475 lunches per day. They offer a wide assortment of foods daily; with emphasis on freshly prepared/from scratch entrees, salads and sandwich choices; colorful fruits and vegetables; whole grain items daily and low fat dairy products. Linda and her team bake the majority of their bread products and baked goods from scratch using 51% whole wheat flour.

Receiving the HealthierUS School Challenge Gold Award has had the most positive impact on Linda and her staff at Lolo Elementary. Linda and her staff enjoy a great working environment that is colorful, happy and inviting. Lolo Elementary Food Service invites parents and community members to lunch on a daily basis. Linda appreciates support from the teachers and administration and credits the wonderful kitchen staff who welcomes their students daily. This positive environment, along with exceptionally healthy menu planning, has contributed to the outstanding successes of Lolo Elementary Food Service Program.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Procurement • Food Production • Menu Planning • Sanitation/Safety (SERVSAFE/HACCP) • Marketing • Increasing Participation • Inventory Control • Personnel Management • Record Keeping • Nutrition Education (In Cafeteria/Classroom) • School Breakfast Program • School Lunch Program • Alternative Line • Utilization of Commodity Foods • Meeting Nutrition Standards • Use of Nutrient Analysis Software Program Nutri-kids



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CINDY GIESE

Cindy is currently the Cooperative Purchasing Coordinator for the OPI Cooperative Bid. She started in this position in October 2013 and is enjoying working with food service personnel across Montana. Her goal is to make "the bid" a user friendly, economically feasible, and nutritional menu choice option for all schools across the state. She works from her home in Lewistown and is happy to help whenever possible.

Cindy is the retired Food Service Director for the Lewistown Public Schools (grades K-12) in Lewistown, Montana. Cindy was employed in school food service for 15 years. Her previous experience includes 11 years as a school secretary responsible for all lunch accounts, free/reduced applications, daily record participation reports and submitting the monthly financial reports to the business office.

Because of her experience of working with 20 employees serving breakfast, lunch and a la carte items in a district of 1200 students and staff, Cindy believes she can be a resource to others for a wide variety of aspects in a school food service. Her successful program was due in part to strong support of the community and staff, offering choices on the line, establishing cycle menus, training staff in safety procedures and allowing them creativity and input into the operation.

While Cindy was at Lewistown Public Schools, breakfast was expanded to all five buildings, a computerized accounting system compatible with district software was acquired, a successful in-district catering program was run, students were involved in special event days and activities and staff teamwork was proudly accomplished.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Procurement • Sanitation/Safety • Marketing • Increasing Participation • Service Options • Personnel Management • Nutrition Education (in the classroom) • School Breakfast • Lunch Program • A la Carte, Catering



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LYNNE KEENAN

Lynne Keenan is the food service director for Browning Public Schools (grades K-12) in Browning, MT where she oversees personnel, procurement, production, and service of school nutrition programs including the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, and Summer Feeding and Snack Programs. Lynne has been employed in the school food service industry for the last 15 years, but she has 20 years experience in the restaurant business as the owner of her own deli/bakery. On top of all of that, Lynne has an educational background in business management. She has served as a board member and an executive on the Montana School Nutrition Association (MSNA) Board since 2004.

The Browning Public Schools food service includes breakfast, lunch, After School Snacks, and Summer Meals. Lynne and her staff (20 employees) serve 1000 breakfast and 2000 lunch meals. In addition, they serve 200 After School Snacks daily and 500 meals/day in the summer.

The success of the Browning Public School Food Service program can be attributed in part to the increase in choices of all items (especially fruits and vegetables), increase in homemade entrees instead of convenience items, remodeling of the high school to make it less institutional, and a Breakfast Bar at the High School offering a balanced breakfast. Lynne has won 4 special awards over the course of the years which she considers to have had the most positive impact on her school food service program: 1) a Victory Against Hunger Congressional Award in 2003 for educating and encouraging the community to eat more fruits and vegetables, 2) a Montana Nutrition Advisory Council Governor's Award for Summer Feeding Programs in 2004, 3) a Montana OPI School Nutrition Programs Best Practice Award for reaching needy populations in the summer months via the Summer Feeding Program in 2004, and 4) the Food Security Council Award Gates of the Mountains for opening the gates to end hunger in 2015.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Sanitation/Safety (ServSafe/HACCP) • Marketing • Increasing Participation • Nutrition Education (In cafeteria/classroom) • Summer Food Service Program



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DONA KRUSE

Dona is the Food Service Director for the Huntley Project Schools (grades K-12) in Worden, Montana. Dona has been employed in school food service for 25 years. Her previous experience includes 12 years as the head baker at St. Vincent's Hospital in Billings, MT.

Dona and her staff (6 employees) serve 150 breakfasts and 625 lunches (this is 80% of the school's enrollment) daily, while also offering a summer feeding program. In 2005 Huntley Project School received a grant for an after school program. They now serve snacks to all the participating students.

Dona's program is proof that offering choices will increase participation. This successful food service program offers three choices at breakfast- regular menu item, yogurt, or cold cereal; and three choices at lunch—regular menu item, chef salad, or peanut butter and jelly sandwich. The students also have the option to serve themselves from a full salad bar, which is offered on a daily basis and included with their meal (not charged for separately). Junior high and high school students enjoy the availability of a 'la carte beverages with their lunches, which has helped boost the number of meals served to these older students.

Recently, Huntley Project built a new kitchen giving Dona the experience of designing a school kitchen as well as learn how to transition from the old to the new one.

With Dona and her staff maintaining positive and friendly communication with the students and school staff, it creates a pleasant, welcoming atmosphere in the lunchroom. Not only is the atmosphere great, the food is too! Dona routinely revises her menus with new items, while cooking from scratch as much as possible.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Increasing Participation • Service (Self Serve, Scramble Approach, etc.) • Personnel Management • School Breakfast Program • School Lunch Program • Catering • Food Procurement • Kitchen Designing • Food Production • Student Fundraising



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KATHY MARTIN

Kathy has been employed in the school food service for almost ten years, but being one of ten children, she has always prepared foods for large groups of people. She worked in Food Service Departments in hospitals and nursing homes for 15 years, working her way through the ranks to manager where she remained for 8 years. Kathy joined the team at Corvallis School District in 1997. As a Montana girl, she strives to keep the “homemade touch”, yet meet the challenge of limited staff and budget in a self funded program. Kathy is ServSafe certified and she is trained in cake decorating and garnishing. Currently, Kathy is a member of OPI Community Food Committee and the School District Safety Committee.

Corvallis School serves 100+ breakfasts and 775-825 lunches daily and employs nine food service staff members.

Kathy credits the success of the Corvallis School Food Program to staff involvement as they truly care about the customer and are willing to go the extra mile for each and every student and staff member. Corvallis School offers a variety of choices including Grab N Go, alternate lines, salad bar, and hot meals to go; all of which have been very successful. Having an open door and being willing to help throughout the school and the community has aided in their success, as well as being flexible, keeping an open mind and being willing to say, “No problem.”

Kathy believes that their catering services have changed the old image of school lunch into a more positive one. Catering has opened an opportunity for people to taste their great food, the staff has fun doing something a little different, and making a little extra money never hurt anyone!

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Production • Marketing • Increased Participation • Recipe Development • Inventory Control • Cost Control • Personnel Management • Record Keeping • Utilization of commodity food • Catering



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WANDA SAND

Wanda is the Food Service Supervisor for Fairfield School (grades K-12) in Fairfield, MT. Wanda has 37 years experience working in school food service. Wanda began working for the school food service program in 1977 as the assistant cook and in 1989 she was promoted to supervisor. Wanda is a member of the School Nutrition Association (SNA)/Montana School Nutrition Association (MSNA) and is certified as a Food Service Tech III with SNA. Wanda has also held a number of positions on the MSNA executive board; secretary, area rep., chapter development chair, vendor chair, vice president, president, and past president.

Fairfield School food service program participates in the breakfast and the lunch programs. Wanda and her staff (4 employees) serve 80-90 breakfasts and 260-280 lunches daily. Starting in 2014 Wanda and her staff have the pleasure of utilizing a new kitchen due to a Quality School Grant that they received.

Putting the customer first and going the extra mile is the underlying success for this lunch program. Offering home baked products (they use very few convenience foods), customer-friendly business hours, willingness to assist all departments in the school, flexibility, and the readiness to respond to students' requests are some of the key elements to their success. Having a fresh approach in foods and attitude has made the most positive impact for this program.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Procurement • Food Production • Menu Planning • Sanitation/Safety (ServSafe/HACCP) • Record Keeping • School Lunch Program • Breakfast Program • After School Snack • Fresh Fruit & Veggie Program • Utilization of Commodity Foods • Use of a Nutrient Analysis Software Program • Nutrikids



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CAROL SIMANTON

Carol is the Managing Head Cook for the Whitewater School District (grades K-12) in Whitewater, MT. Carol has been employed in school food service for 18 years. She is an active member of the Montana School Nutrition Association (MSNA) and has served on the executive board for the last five years. Carol is legislative chair person for the MSNA. Carol is a winner of the Louise Sublette Award and considers applying for and winning this award the catalyst that resulted in improved communications and networking with the students.

The Whitewater School district participates in the breakfast and lunch program. Carol and her staff (1 employee) serve approximately 50 breakfasts daily (this is 70% of their enrollment) and 80 lunches per day.

The implementation of the breakfast program is one of the reasons the Whitewater School District food service program continues to attract more and more students. Another dynamic of this program's continuing growth can be attributed to the variety of choices offered at breakfast. Each day students receive a choice of 4 to 5 menu items to select from including, cereal, yogurt, fresh fruit, and a variety of juices, toast and muffins. The opportunity for choices is not limited just to breakfast; along with their regular lunch meal students are offered a full salad bar stocked with a variety of salads, fresh fruit, and vegetables daily. Carol thinks trying new ideas and observing the students' response is a key ingredient in continued success.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Production • Menu Planning • Sanitation/Safety (ServSafe/HACCP) • Increasing Participation • Service (Self Serve, Scramble Approach etc.) • Inventory Control • Cost Control • Personnel Management • Record Keeping • Nutrition Education (in Cafeteria, Classroom) • School Breakfast Program • School Lunch Program



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JAY STAGG

Jay Stagg is the Food Service Director for Whitefish Public Schools (grades K-12) in Whitefish, Montana. While Jay has been employed in school food service for the last four years, his previous experience includes 20 years of restaurant food service and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Miami University.

Jay and his staff (7 employees) serve 100 breakfasts, 500 lunches, and offer a la carte choices daily to the four schools in the district.

Jay specializes in providing eye-appealing, tasty and kid-friendly meals; the majority of which are prepared from scratch. Jay's school meals offer many fresh fruits and vegetables. Whitefish Schools serve local produce as much as possible including potatoes, carrots, apples, lettuce, squash, and onions. Jay coordinates numerous Farm to School activities and events, in which local farms, students, and the school cafeteria join together to bring healthy foods and nutrition education to life.

Local foods are just one special aspect of Whitefish's School meals program. Others include a slow elimination of "heat and serve processed meals", providing positive marketing to parents and the community to raise awareness of the healthier choices, and the honor of receiving a Healthier Montana Menu Challenge Award for Healthy School Lunches in 2009 from the Montana Office of Public Instruction in 2009.

Jay and his staff frequently modify existing recipes to include healthy ingredients and are not afraid to serve new recipes to students with a smile. Jay possesses exceptional time-saving scratch cooking techniques, which he is willing to share with others.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Procurement • Food Production • Menu Planning • Sanitation/Safety • Marketing • Service (Self-Serve, Scramble Approach, etc.) • Recipe Development • Inventory Control • Cost Control • School Breakfast Program • School Lunch Program • Utilization of USDA Foods • Meeting Nutrition Standards • Nutri-Kids Nutrition Analysis Software • A la Carte Catering



School District #29
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ROBIN VOGLER

Robin Vogler has been the Food Service Director for School District #29 since 2006 where she has made continuous, healthy and sustainable changes to the program. After many years of serving frozen products with few fresh ingredients in the District #29 school cafeterias, Robin revamped the program to include an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain products and from-scratch cooking. Robin incorporates Farm to School connections to create many school lunches from scratch using locally produced fare including grass-fed beef and other items. Robin has also hosted a FoodCorps member at her school for the last five years working to expand access to local and nutritious food.

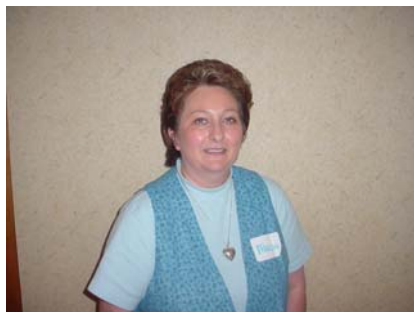
Robin has built an extensive history of 20+ years of food service experience; working as a school food service baker and in restaurants, including leadership and management positions. During the summers, Robin keeps busy as a private chef providing catering services. Currently, Robin is a member of the School Nutrition Association with 3rd level certification, Montana School Nutrition Association, Montana Farm to School, the National and Montana Educators Association, and has been awarded with the Healthy Montana School Challenge award and received bronze level for Healthier US Challenge.

Somers School offers a variety of choices including Grab-N-Go, a daily soup and salad bar, and vegetarian offerings as part of the hot lunch line most days of the week. Fresh fruit plates are offered as a lunch selection every Tuesday and have proven to be an extremely popular item. Robin features fresh baked whole grain products daily such as whole wheat dinner rolls, pizza crusts, and bread bowls.

Since Robin's arrival, participation in the school breakfast program has increased to an average of 70 to 90 students daily. She and her staff of four serve approximately 450 meals daily. Nutritious after school snacks are enjoyed by 30-50 students everyday. Robin has worked hard to completely transform the image of school cafeteria food to a new, fresh, exciting, and healthy image. Robin is proud of the accomplishments she has made over the past few years, and is excited to have the opportunity to have such a positive impact on the food service program.

On top of all the amazing work she does with school meals, Robin still finds time to teach a course on nutrition to the 7th and 8th graders at her school.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Production • Marketing • Increased Participation • Recipe Development • Inventory Control • Cost Control • Fund Raising • Nutrition Education • Utilization of Commodity Foods • Farm to School • FoodCorps • and Catering



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MARSHA WARTICK

Marsha is the Food Service Supervisor for the Ronan School District #30 (grades K-12) in Ronan, MT. Marsha has been involved in the food service industry over 35 years. In 2000 she began working for school food services as the Ronan School District Supervisor. Marsha's career in school food service has been extremely active and productive. She became a member of the School Nutrition Association (SNA)/Montana School Nutrition Association (MSNA) in 2000, attended the summer school seminar in 2001, began the After School Program in 2001 and received the USDA After School Award in 2002.

In addition to these major accomplishments, Marsha was involved in the designing and building of a new kitchen that was completed in March of 2003. Ronan was also featured in the Making It Happen! Nutrition Successes that was put out by the CDC/USDA! What a compliment!

Marsha received the Montana Governor's award in 2006. In the spring of 2013 she attended the USDA Produce University and in June of 2014 she was featured in the National School Nutrition Magazine. She is also a member of the ABC committee. The Ronan School District food service program participates in the breakfast, lunch, after school snack and the summer meal programs. Marsha and her staff (18 employees) serve 500-700 breakfasts, 1100 lunches, 150-250 after school snacks daily, and 100-200 summer meals per day.

Over the last several years there have been a number of high impact changes in the Ronan school food service program. These successful innovations include: a fresh fruit breakfast bar available to middle and high school students, the inclusion of a salad bar for high school and middle school students, the addition of a 2nd choice option for high school students which is reimbursable, the introduction of the after school snack program, and the participation in the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Marsha feels the availability of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program has been a major contributor to their success.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Production • Menu Planning • Marketing • Increasing Participation • Service (self serve, scramble approach etc.) • Inventory Control • Cost Control • Record Keeping • School Breakfast Program • School Lunch Program • After School Snack Program • Summer Food Service Program • FF&V Program • DOD Program • Utilization of Commodities • Catering



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TAMMY WHAM

Tammy is the Head Cook for the Ennis School District (grades K-12) in Ennis, MT. Tammy has worked in school food service since 2001, the first year as assistant cook, and the following year she was promoted to Head Cook. Prior to her career in food services Tammy attended vocational school for training in computers and has worked at her parents' restaurant since 1982.

Tammy and her staff (4 employees) serve an average of 140 breakfasts and an average of 280 lunches per day. Currently, an impressive 80% of the high school students are participating in the school lunch program!

Friendly faces, a relaxing atmosphere, enjoyable good food and a variety of choices are Tammy's key to a successful food service program. Potato bar, deli bar two soups served daily and a variety of fresh fruits are just a few examples of the many choices her students have an opportunity to explore.

Continually maintaining a fresh approach in menu planning, food choices, serving, and customer relations has encouraged students to enjoy their mealtimes, thus increasing participation in the program.

Consultant Areas of Expertise Include: • Food Procurement • Food Production • Increasing Participation • Service (self serve, scramble approach, etc.) • Recipe Development • Use of Nutrient Analysis Software Program